

But even after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, it was still several years before we got to the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery; the 14th Amendment, which guaranteed citizenship and due process; and then the 15th Amendment, which gave us and ratified for us the right to vote.

I think that, without a doubt, when we look back on all that has happened, particularly considering how we got here, that this commemoration is important. It is overdue. It ought to be an annual celebration.

I, again, thank the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina for convening us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from North Carolina has expired.

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 155th anniversary of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. Passed by the House of Representatives on January 31, 1865, the 13th Amendment was ratified and put into effect on December 6, 1865.

Section 1 of the 13th Amendment states, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

This amendment is what allows Black people the legal status to be free, unbound, and unchained here in our country. If this amendment were not in place, we would still be slaves and subject to the forced subjugation of others. Before the ratification of this amendment, Black people in the U.S. were enslaved and owned by other people. Now, we are owned by no one.

This legacy in the U.S., this original sin, is recognized as an abomination to mankind. As I travel throughout the world, I am reminded of the greatness of our nation, but I am also intensely aware of the faults, shortcomings, and injustices that still plague us today. It is a sad reflection on our society that we are still fighting for complete and pure freedom in our country, to share in the fundamental rights guaranteed by our constitution to every person.

It is without question that we love this country and for most people, know no other place to call home. We have struggled, fought, and even died along the path to freedom. Our very existence has been met with severe hardships. No one today can imagine the horrors that slaves were subjected to daily.

However, there are those who, even today, say that slavery for Black people was a good thing and a blessing in disguise. This errant view is void of reality and ridiculous on its face.

The evils of slavery are too many to comprehensively and adequately express. There are thousands of helpless people who were bound, shackled, whipped, quartered, hung, burned and endured unspeakable horrors whose stories will never be told.

The lasting effects of slavery permeate many aspects of society today. Institutionalized racism, discrimination and prejudices are each lasting remnants of our history and are present with us even now. Our challenge is to continue to fight to wipe out these insidious vestiges of a time long passed and a gruesome period of every day American life.

Our nation will be forever stained with the blood of slavery. Our nation will be forever blessed by the freedom and liberty that the ratification of the 13th Amendment brings. Let us continue the never ending fight for freedom as we move towards prosperity for everyone.

While the 13th Amendment legally ended slavery in the United States, we know that for many it did not end in 1865. Thousands of Black people were either uninformed of their liberty or just outright denied their rights to be free. They were forced into continued servitude and grueling work to support the needs of their owners and masters. In Texas, word of freedom and liberation from the slave owners and masters of plantations and farms did not reach Black people until a whole two years later.

Slavery in the United States was not just a way of life, but an oppressive institution that was designed to profit off of the free labor of Black folk. It was extremely prosperous. It is without question that our nation was built on the backs of Black people who continuously suffered the indignities, degradation and humiliation of being enslaved.

We cannot afford to rest, sleep or be caught off guard. Even though the 13th Amendment is in place, it does not mean that it cannot be changed. All we truly have to do is look at the last administration and its constant attacks on the freedom of people in the U.S. and its attacks on our democratic institutions. Our freedom must be protected.

Please allow me to briefly turn my attention to the relationship between the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, proposed after the Civil War, granted enslaved Black people freedom, citizenship, and the right to vote. The 15th Amendment declared that the right of U.S. citizens to vote could "not be abridged or denied" by any state "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." These rights are still being attacked by those who would deny all people of color freedom, citizenship and the fundamental right to vote. The third and final Amendment during the Reconstruction Era—was adopted to protect the freedoms outlined in the 13th and 14th Amendments. Make no mistake—Reconstruction for Black people was devastating and a gross erosion of rights that were supposed to be guaranteed.

Mr. Speaker, our country is no longer divided between free states and slave states. We are now one. While we take this time to recognize and celebrate this critical benchmark in the history of our country, we must continue to fight to be the land of the free.

MARKING RATIFICATION OF 13TH AMENDMENT

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I thank all the speakers this evening. I understand the time has been precious, and I thank all of them for their patience and willingness to participate.

The 13th Amendment reads as follows: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude . . . shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

This amendment was added to the United States Constitution by an act of

Congress on January 31, 1865, ratified by the requisite number of States on December 6, 1865, 155 years ago.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO GREG WALDEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) for 30 minutes.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, this 30 minutes is a tribute to our leader who is leaving us, GREG WALDEN, the top Republican on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the former chairman, and, obviously, a good friend to everyone on both sides of the aisle.

Knowing that many Members have plenty of meetings that are starting, I am going to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HUDSON).

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friend and my colleague, Congressman GREG WALDEN, on his retirement, following more than 20 years representing Oregon's Second District here in Congress.

As a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Chairman WALDEN has been a real mentor to me. I have seen firsthand Chairman WALDEN's love for his country, dedication to his district, and hard work on so many important priorities for our Nation, like healthcare, energy independence, and telecommunications.

I have so many fond memories of the work we have done together and the time we have spent. I especially enjoyed working with Chairman WALDEN on H.R. 6, landmark legislation to combat the opioid crisis.

Chairman WALDEN, you will be dearly missed, but I wish you, Mylene, Anthony, and your entire family all the best.

I urge my colleagues to join me in thanking Congressman GREG WALDEN for his extraordinary service.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON), also a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I, too, rise today to pay tribute to my good friend and mentor on the Energy and Commerce Committee, GREG WALDEN.

I spent 27 years in the United States Air Force. We lived by a code of conduct every day. We came to work. We embodied those core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all that we do.

In my experience, it is not often that you find people in private life or in other sectors of public life who also embody those same core values, but Chairman GREG WALDEN does.

Whether he was fighting for healthcare changes for the American people, to make America more energy independent and secure, whether he was trying to make sure that Big Tech did not overrun the American people,